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SOLEMNIS

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JEAN B. SHELDON





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MISSA SOLEMNIS







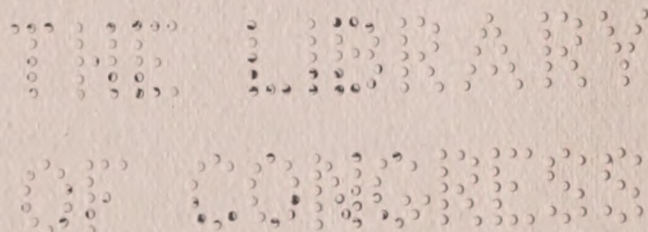
# MISSA SOLEMNIS

BY

ADOLPHE RIBAUX

*TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH, WITH THE  
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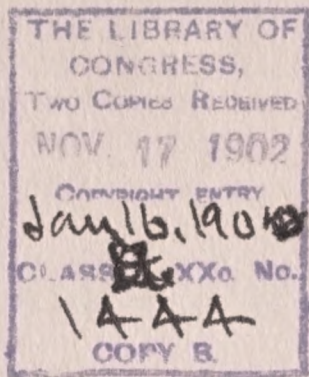
JEAN B. SHELDON



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## In Memoriam

SORROW and striving make the whole world kin. Those who have watched the going out of a fair young life, like a light quenched by some unseen power, know of what I fain would speak, but cannot. They know of the dumb agony and the ceaseless yearning that live forever in the hearts of the brave. They know of the days, the months, the years of lonely striving; they know, also, be it spoken with joy, of the faith born of living and doing,—the faith that *love shall find its own*. In the spirit of this faith every association with the dear one takes on a deeper and more sacred meaning. We treasure the bit of handiwork that the



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skilful fingers have wrought, and, still more, we cherish the thoughts that the busy brain has created. This thought-power, revealed in speech or letter, in poem or translation, becomes our precious legacy.

Jean B. Sheldon was a bright, free, and happy child. Growing to womanhood, she longed for knowledge and for the delights of travel. At Radcliffe and beneath the sunny skies of France and Italy that longing was satisfied. Her teacher and helper in college wrote at her death: "I predicted for her a promising and successful career." Some of the last weeks of her life were spent in translating the sweet, touching story of "*Missa Solemnis*." It is a story one loves because it tells of gratitude and loyalty in youth, and of constancy to a noble ideal in maturity and old age. Full of tender pathos, full of the joy which comes with unceasing struggle, it quickens and inspires. So we are glad to



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preserve it, and if, here or there, some word or sentence seems crude, let it be remembered that the young translator stood just on the threshold of her career.







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**D**ARKNESS was creeping, little by little, through the Gothic cathedral, — the masterpiece of an unknown architect, — where the graceful and extremely delicate details were already merged into an unadorned and imposing whole. The magnificent rose-window, set in the high organ-loft above the principal portal, was lighted up from within by the slanting rays of the declining sun, which streamed through the lofty windows where Christ, the Virgin, and the saints rose from among symbolic red and golden lilies of rubies and chrysolites. Already one



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of the aisles was entirely shrouded in darkness, and the obscurity was increasing and diffusing, with sepulchral coolness, through the immense stone vaulted structure.

Two persons were in the organ gallery.

The one, seated on a stool in a corner, leaning against an open-work trefoiled balustrade, was a thin and feeble old man. Innumerable wrinkles furrowed his face. He would have appeared homely had it not been for the charming candor of his eyes, — eyes of a child ignorant of the darker side of life, or of a true poet who has contemplated nothing but his own dreams, — and for the majesty of his broad, high forehead, which portrayed the constant habit of noble thought; a forehead marked with the stamp of genius and crowned by an unruly, magnificent



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wealth of snow-white hair which fell upon his neck in silken locks. His dress was very simple, almost poor; a coarse brown cloth suit, of an old-fashioned cut, and stout shoes. He wore no ornaments. His only luxury was his immaculately white linen. Conrad Waldmann was the name of the old man. For more than half a century he had been organist and professor of music in the little capital of this very small German Principality.

The other person, Christian Hofer, appeared to be about twenty-one years old. He was tall, slight, with a distinguished bearing. He also was modestly clothed. His profile reminded one of certain portraits of Schiller when a young man. The outline of the lips was exquisite. A sculptor would have been charmed with the nose and its quivering nos-



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trils, — an alarming sign of sensuality, which, however, was neutralized by the transparency of the amber-gray eyes and by the nobleness of the forehead, similar to that of the old man, only smooth as the petals of a camellia. His chestnut-brown hair curled tightly in thick ringlets. He was seated before the organ, and his long, slender fingers ran over the yellow key-board with marvellous speed and accuracy, opened and closed the registers without going astray an instant, while, on the pedal clavier, his feet, equally agile, moved in unison with his fingers, both docile slaves of a talent in full possession of itself.

The young man played with his whole soul; with his whole soul the octogenarian listened. A fraternal bond of sympathy transported them toward the heights; together



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they held communion with the Ideal.

Now the sonata — one of Johann Sebastian Bach's — finishes with a solemn *maestoso*, a fearful roaring where the last judgment trumpets seem to resound. Then the tempest stops abruptly and dies away, at the same time that the flowers of the mystical garden in the pointed arched windows begin to grow pale.

“Tell me, Master, are you satisfied?” Anxiously young Christian turned towards his judge.

The old man waited a moment before answering; then, emphasizing the words, in order to give to each its weight: —

“More than satisfied, my child! As far as the profession can go, you have nothing more to learn. Your interpretation is excellent. Your two years at the Conservatory have not



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been lost, and I see that, even under the direction of the Leipzig masters, you have remembered the counsels of this simple old man, Conrad Waldmann. You are a skilful performer, but you are more, you are an artist. Without fear I can confide this dear, venerable organ to you. Love it as I have loved it. Never put it to any but noble uses. I have been told that in many of the churches in Spain and Italy the organists — they are unworthy to bear the name — execute opera airs and even waltzes. Profanation! Disgraceful profanation! The organ is the king of instruments; to desecrate it in this way is just as bad as to use the consecrated vessels of the tabernacle for a drunken revelry. The organ is sacred. In it there is an echo of the voice of God. Therefore it should be touched only with respect, with



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reverential fear. This organ is like me, very weary, very decrepit. But it is a faithful servant, worthy of honor. I give it up to you with perfect confidence, my child. While communing with it, think sometimes of your first master. Above all, remember that about one hundred and fifty years ago, when passing by chance through this city and visiting the cathedral, — so the records testify, — the model for us all, Johann Sebastian Bach, played here this same sonata which you have just rendered.”

“I will remember,” replied the young man, with a feeling of profound reverence.

The darkness and chill were increasing. Christian aided the old man, and both descended the narrow winding staircase coming out on the beautiful square which was a pre-



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cious jewel casket in the same style as the church, each façade being an architectural gem.

The zenith was emerald green, the middle zone the color of amethysts, the horizon crimson, for the sun was soon to disappear.

“Oh, what a glorious evening!” murmured Waldmann. “What do you say to taking a short walk?”

They sauntered along through the suburbs to the country. The air was laden with the fragrance of the season's last roses. In the orchards the trees with their purple foliage appeared like cardinals united for a conclave. Spotted cows browsed on the short grass, interspersed with fleabane, meadow-saffron, and parnassia. The surroundings were full of the sad charms of autumn.

The master and pupil walked amongst the vines, from which the



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grapes had been gathered, and through the half-withered hop-fields. Here and there the garden of a peasant was still adorned with dahlias and nasturtiums.

“Our organ is like me,” said Waldmann, “old and worn. It is in need of serious repairs, and the money is not wanting; at the meeting yesterday the Council voted to give ten thousand marks for this purpose, and the Princess added a liberal sum taken from her private purse. You must know that an arrangement has been made with Nisch, the celebrated organ-builder of Nuremberg. He has signed the contract with the burgomaster, and will soon arrive, bringing with him the necessary materials and workmen. Nisch thinks that in order to do the work thoroughly, six or eight weeks will be needed. Therefore you will be



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able to make your first appearance about the middle of December, perhaps before. My work is done; yours begins. Take courage, Christian! ”

The lingering sun bathed in splendor the surrounding country. The perfume of the roses scented the air.

“What a glorious evening,” repeated Waldmann, “to bid farewell to active life and begin the apprenticeship of death! Notice how calm and peaceful everything is! Nature, whom winter will soon cover with gloom, regrets nothing, having accomplished her work and knowing that April will come again. God grant that I may follow her example and go to sleep with confidence, in the hope of an eternal springtime! ”

He continued, with a strange voice, in which something mysterious from an unseen world seemed to vibrate: “Art will be your safeguard against



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all the sorrows of existence, because you love it. It will console you for whatever disappointments, whatever sufferings this life may have in store for you. In it, and in it alone, you will have a foretaste of the infinite, a prophecy of the divine. Oh, how beautiful this evening is, Christian, how beautiful it is! Just look at that little red cloud! Could not one imagine it to be a boat, in a dream, which was going to take us to a perfect world, where it would not be necessary to give instruction to gain one's daily bread; where one would have no other occupation than to play on noble organs, unless it were to kneel and listen to Palestrina, Bach, Händel, or Mozart? "

The sun had now set and a single star twinkled in the heavens. The bells rang out sweetly from the old cathedral tower.



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"The Angelus," murmured Conrad, devoutly uncovering his snow-white head. "Odile will be getting worried. Take me back, my child."

They turned back, and a quarter of an hour later arrived at the old man's home, a little house hiding its age under a mantle of wild vines.

Odile, Conrad's servant, who was almost as old as he, though still active, was at the window anxiously watching for his coming.

"Here I am, Odile, here I am. I wanted to drink in a bit of fresh air before shutting myself up in my cell. Don't worry, I have n't taken cold."

Then, stretching out his hands to Christian:

"You will come to see me, won't you? Come soon. Again I say, take courage."



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Fifty-eight years before, the organist of this little city having died, there was a competitive examination to fill the vacancy. The conditions, giving the requirements as nearly as possible had been published; each candidate would have to appear twice, first in a classical composition, secondly in an impromptu on a given theme. Four competitors presented themselves on the date appointed. Three of these were men of middle age, and were highly recommended. The fourth was a very young man, unknown and without sponsors. The judges naturally expected he would withdraw from the contest, for surely he could not have talent enough to enter the lists against such odds. Some one took the liberty of advising him to do so. Finally, as he still persisted in his design, the judges, in order to satisfy their consciences, as-



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signed the last trial to him. "But," they thought, "what singular boldness he shows in daring to contest with talented and experienced organists!"

Each of the others in turn, full of confidence, had executed the required pieces. The choice would be difficult, because they were about equally skilful. The judges, ten members of the City Council, to whom by an ancient custom belonged the right of electing the organist of the cathedral, together with several professors called in from the neighboring towns, stood in an animated group in the choir, discussing the matter. They hardly noted that the stranger had gone up to the organ. Suddenly the judges ceased speaking, and looked at each other in amazement. The young man was playing a selection from Händel with incomparable mastership. His



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technique was perfect; the expression simple, but so impressive that it was impossible not to be moved by it. The judges were struck dumb; the disdainful expression which hitherto the faces of the three other competitors had alike worn, gave way to one of consternation comical to witness. The stranger, after finishing his selection from Händel, had become a notable person. The themes on which the competitors were to improvise had been chosen by lot. To the young man had fallen an old, popular, touchingly melancholy *lied*. His variations were admirable; so clear and solemn were they that the judges were overcome by surprise, and the hopes of the three other competitors were blighted. For half an hour his voluntary, infinitely varied and always of a grave character, developed itself according to his fancy. When he



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came down from the gallery, his rivals were eclipsed. He was complimented, shaken hands with, and unanimously elected, before any one even thought to ask him where he had studied, or whether he had a diploma. To have heard him was enough. He only gave them his name and his birthplace, a ruined quarter of Pomerania, and he told them that he was alone in the world.

On that very day he rented a small house in a little side street and quickly installed himself, having only a valise and a few pieces of household furniture bought at a second-hand shop. For thirty years he lived there without a servant. His dinners were brought to him from the nearest inn, and his other meals consisted of bread and milk.

The contrast was great between the sterile, gray Pomerania and this



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beautiful country abounding in gushing brooks, fertile fields, and shady forests. Immediately, Conrad Waldmann became very fond of his new home; after having been here six months, he loved it as a son loves his mother, both for its actual charms and for what books taught him of its history.

The city had been a brilliant capital of a very small Principality. In the good old times of the minnesingers the people lived in a continuous round of festivities; tournaments and poetical contests were followed by competitions between painters and goldsmiths. The court, nobility, and citizens vied with one another in their efforts to promote the fine arts, and of this the artists who came from all about — Germany, Flanders, and even Italy — were quite aware. All artists were received here with



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honor, hurried with orders, and in exchange for this intelligent appreciation and generous hospitality they took pleasure in endowing the city with works of literature and art; some with wood-carvings, others with poems, paintings, or some fine piece of architecture, while one gave a silver church-lamp wrought in repoussé. Centuries passed away; the roar of the cannon banished the joyful songs. The Principality underwent days of trial, suffered under the power of barbarous conquerors, saw her lawful masters driven into exile or reduced to the rank of simple vassals. At length, however, after many struggles, the city came back into the hands of its rightful rulers. But other times had dawned and other customs reigned; the gay past did not come to life again. Now the little city was very quiet, lulled



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to sleep, as it were, about its gem of a palace on the border of its emerald green stream. Those whose principal objects in life were bustling activity or amusements, called the city dead; but those to whom quietness and abundant verdure were pleasing stopped here and were glad to return. Guide-books mentioned its little museum, two of its fountains noted for the statues of Saint George and Saint Michael, the cathedral altar-screen, and the cathedral itself, the sculpturing of which reminds one of Bruges lace.

In its rustic frame of low hills stretching itself out under a comparatively mild sky, the little city resembled those which are pictured in old engravings. The façades of the buildings were covered with naïve inscriptions; coats of arms, ornaments, and arabesques were prom-



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inent; the finest appeared like mass-book illuminations. The many tiled roofs, gables, and belfries gave to it a very picturesque appearance. Outside the windows, which had round or diamond-shaped panes, set in lead, sweet peas climbed and blossomed; inside, pots of pinks and rosemary, watered in the morning by charming girls wearing white kerchiefs, were arranged in rows. The students gave a little life to the town, although they did not number more than two or three hundred. On regular days and hours they filled the narrow streets with the cheerful notes of the *Gaudeamus igitur*. Ordinarily, however, the city slept and dreamed.

The position of organist was a poorly paid one. Conrad Waldmann had added to his salary by giving students lessons in his profession. The compensation, however, was small,



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and as he had no other resources, his financial condition continued very low. On the other hand his wants were few; he avoided society, his only diversion being walks in the fields and woods. People said of him, "He is an odd fellow, who repulses all advances, and whose unsocial nature cannot be changed." This opinion having become general, Waldmann was left to the solitude which he seemed to like more than anything else. However, he was highly esteemed on account of his musical talent, which had developed from year to year, and also for his irreproachable character, in which calumny had vainly striven to find a flaw.

Into this life, apparently so calm and unruffled, some intimated in guarded words, but with no shadow of proof, that a romance had entered,



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an idyllic love passage which had left a lasting impress by its tragic ending. This event, it was said, was in the long ago.

Conrad Waldmann gave lessons to the only daughter of the reigning Prince. She, as fresh as a branch of white lilacs, with the grace and mystic charm of one of Hemling's saints, was gifted with a beautiful voice. The report was that Conrad was deeply in love with her, and that she did not disdain his passion. They had been seen walking together in the palace gardens, which were laid out in the French fashion, a miniature copy of those at Versailles, planted with yew trees and trimmed box, with little ponds here and there, and mythological statues. Indeed, it was these walks which had betrayed them; such a love-light shone in their eyes that no one could mistake



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the condition of their hearts. Then, suddenly, it was learned that the doctors had ordered the Princess Elsa to go to a warmer climate, on account of a pretended illness, and one day a large emblazoned berlin had set out, through the windows of which people said they saw the sweet face of the young girl bathed in tears. The dowager Princess had accompanied her, and their absence had lasted three years, at the end of which time the marriage of Elsa to her own cousin was proclaimed, — a marriage reconciling the claims of the youngest and eldest family branches, and assuring the succession to the throne. A year and a half later, the flag which was always to be seen on the principal tower of the palace was hung at half-mast: Hemling's little saint had undertaken a new voyage towards a land where



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State policy did not contradict the heart's desire. She left a little baby girl, who would inherit the Principality, the reigning Prince having no other child than Elsa, and being so old he would not marry again.

From that time on, Conrad Waldmann had become more silent than ever, only going out to give lessons, to perform his duties as an organist, and once in a great while to take a walk in the woods, but he had never asked any one to accompany him. Indeed, never a word had fallen from his lips which could have given any foundation to the tittle-tattle of the town. If, in truth, he had loved the Princess Elsa, the secret had been well guarded, like a relic in the depths of a sacred sanctuary.

With the years, the little Princess grew to girlhood. A master from another town had been called in to



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teach her music, a fact which had confirmed the people in their suppositions. Then, other years having glided by, no one thought any more about the matter. Besides, the father and husband of Elsa were dead, and her daughter now occupied the throne.

Conrad invariably passed his evenings at home, reading, meditating, or dotting down notes on music paper. This was his revenge on fate, — these hours when, doors and windows closed, he was able to give himself up to inspiration and to catch those divine whisperings which were murmured in his ear. What sweet pain, what blissful feverishness, what affliction, too, he endured at times in this struggle which was like the struggle of Jacob with the archangel. But that, too, was joy. His temples throbbed as though they would burst.



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Lava ran through his veins. Victoriously he escaped from reality. In such a state Conrad had composed much: *lieder*, sonatas, symphonies, a whole suite of composures for the organ. Two or three timid attempts with editors had made him understand that a simple organist in a small town and a music teacher like himself had no chance of succeeding. That result could be gained only by influence, intrigue, or subserviency. What folly to think of succeeding by his own merit. Conrad was proud. When one has wealth, pride in the eyes of the world is called dignity, and becomes a virtue. When one is poor, it is looked upon as presumption, and is a serious failing. Conrad did what Johann Sebastian Bach had done before him; he buried his compositions in the depths of a closet. However, he did not stop composing,



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although the idea of gaining renown had been given up once and for all. His greatest work, *Missa Solemnis*, was a mass for Christmas-tide, composed for an orchestra with chorus, solo, and organ, the latter part being highly developed. He had consecrated twenty years to this composition; never was he satisfied with himself, and often, overcome with terrible despair, he was almost ready to throw it into the fire; in truth he suffered all the martyrdom of a sincere soul which compares the dream to the realization. However, in the midst of these inward struggles which at times moistened Conrad's forehead with the sweat of agony, but which for all that he would not have exchanged for all the luxury of ease, the *Mass* was finished. One evening he had realized that all his science, all his convictions were condensed in



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this work; with a trembling hand he had written the word *finis* at the bottom of the last sheet. Then the bulky score had joined the preceding compositions in the depths of the tomb-like closet, where it had slept for twenty years.

Aside from the composer, only two beings knew about this composition. One was Mephisto, a tom-cat as black as Erebus. Conrad had picked him up in the streets when he was starved, scabby, and miserable. Now, since he had been well cared for, he had become a handsome animal, with a glossy, velvety coat. While Waldmann worked, Mephisto used to sit on the table in front of him, and he had been the first to hear the descants of the *Missa Solemnis* tried by Conrad's voice. The other privileged being, more capable of appreciating it, was Christian Hofer, the favorite pupil of



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the *maestro*. Christian, a little urchin of the town, was the son of a humble blacksmith. One night, when the organist, who was so extremely conscientious that he practised every day, had come to play for an hour in the deserted cathedral, he had found the child at the foot of the gallery stairs sobbing so piteously that a heart of stone would have been moved.

“What are you doing there, little one, and what is the matter?”

After much questioning Conrad learned that Christian adored music, and that for months he had crept in behind him every time he had come to the cathedral. Immediately Conrad went to the house of the blacksmith and offered to give the boy lessons, free of charge. The proposal was accepted on account of the supplications of the overjoyed boy. These lessons had lasted eight years.



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Conrad Waldmann, finding in Christian all his aspiration of other times, his enthusiasm, his adoration for art, joined to unflagging application, believed that he was living over his youth again. For eight years he had lavished his care upon this pupil and tried to inspire him with true admiration for the great masters, guiding him step by step in the paths of art toward the highest goal, with the solicitude of a father and the disinterestedness of a great heart. The child was remarkably gifted, and passionately fond of study; he became deeply absorbed in the trying difficulties of harmony, which Conrad compelled him in a merciless manner to overcome. For the rest, he was a noble, kind-hearted, affectionate boy, full of gratitude, and Conrad sometimes said to himself: "If I had a son, I should want him to be like



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Christian.” However, the blacksmith was more or less troubled, and he continually asked, “What good is Christian going to get out of all this?” He would have preferred to teach his son his own trade. Waldmann assured and promised him that “it would bring the child to something,” and he proved it well, when Christian had reached his nineteenth year, by obtaining a scholarship for him from the Town Council, which enabled him to complete his musical education in a good conservatory.

Conrad Waldmann, being so very modest, had seldom spoken of his compositions to Christian. At long intervals he had played to him a part of a sonata, an anthem, an *andante cantabile*, every one of which had increased the ardent admiration of the pupil for his professor. On the very day when Christian had returned



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from Leipzig with a first prize for proficiency on the organ, and another in harmony, Conrad, while sipping to the laureate's health a bottle of Johannisberg which had been presented to him a long time before and had been forgotten, could not resist getting the manuscript of the *Missa Solemnis* from its hiding-place, and taking Christian to the cathedral so that he might hear it from beginning to end. The young man had remained speechless before this unknown work filled with supreme beauties. He had found nothing to say, nothing; but this powerlessness to express the least praise was the best praise. They spent the whole evening in Conrad's room; Christian did not tire of reading and re-reading the score in which he constantly found new treasures. Alas! Its long stay in the damp closet had sadly



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yellowed the paper; in places the ink had nearly disappeared; the mice had nibbled several sheets, but fortunately only on the margins. Christian, startled by the thought that these insignificant causes could in a few more years finish their work of destruction, refused to leave before his master had given him the permission to carry away the manuscript in order to make a new copy of it. The duplicate would be made on indestructible parchment with India ink. At last the old man gave his consent, saying at the same time, "What is the use?" A month later Christian brought him the new copy, which was likewise in its way a work of art. Waldmann admired the suppleness and firmness of the vellum, the minute exactness of the work, and then, putting back the *Missa Solemnis* in its funereal resting-



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place, turned to the young man and said:

“Let us talk about yourself. I am tired; I need rest. To-morrow my resignation will be sent in; you will take my place. This is not a brilliant position. I consider it as only your first round; later you will mount higher. Isn't this your desire?”

“Oh, master, how can I ever repay the thousandth part of what I owe you?”

“So far as your heart is concerned, do not change from what you have been up to this time. As for art, continue to study and to grow. That is how I hope to be recompensed. To-morrow my resignation will be sent in, Christian, or rather I will carry it myself to the Town Council, which meets at five o'clock. People take me for a bearish man, but I have always done my duty, and so they are



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kindly disposed towards me after all. At six o'clock I will be at your father's house with a formal promise of your appointment."

Christian Hofer was to take the place of the aged Waldmann.

. . . . .  
"Ah, my dear child, here you are at last! . . . Yes, at last, because for the past few weeks you have not found a moment to devote to me, and I, although knowing your devoted nature, was beginning to ask myself if the ill-weeds of forgetfulness were already springing up in your heart. However, better late than never. Sit down. I am very glad to see you."

Conrad Waldmann pointed to a seat beside him, which was near the window with little square panes.

"Forget you, master! Oh, you cannot have believed that! "

"Water runs to the river and youth



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to youth. Nothing would be more natural than for you in your leisure hours to prefer an excursion, or a glass of beer, drunk with friends—doubtless you are very popular—to this sombre room, and the conversation of a sad old man.”

“That would be despicable ingratitude on my part, and I should despise myself for it. The truth is, master, I have been very, very busy. You know that Nisch arrived here last month with a whole gang of workmen. The repairs have been conscientiously executed. Your advice has been followed in every particular.”

“Do all the organ stops work now?”

“Gloriously.”

“How about the expression?”

“Alive to the slightest touch.”

“And the *vox humana*?”



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"One would easily mistake it for the human voice."

At each of these answers Conrad Waldmann, his shoulders thrown back and his eyes glistening, seemed to take a new lease on life. His organ, ah, he still loved it.

"So the instrument is perfect now?"

"Perfect."

"Do you know, I should like very much to go to hear you play on it Sunday."

The young man became embarrassed for a moment, but quickly regained his self-composure, and said, in the most natural way:

"Not Sunday, master; I shall not play then, for I have taken a fancy to wait until Christmas so as to make my *début* under the most favorable conditions. Yes, for the midnight mass. I have gathered a chorus, and



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we are diligently studying a high mass. The cathedral is not far from here. If you wrap yourself up well you will run no risk of taking cold. I have the weakness to desire a fine début, master, and I count on your presence to sustain me, for, indeed, to come after you is no small matter."

"What composition have you chosen?"

"Oh, you may be sure that I would not be satisfied with any ordinary work. I have, therefore, hunted not only for a fine piece, but for a masterpiece. Do not ask me for details, I cannot give you any, for it is after half-past seven, and we have a rehearsal at eight. I have just time enough to add that the Princess, who deigned to call me to the palace to congratulate me for having gained the two prizes, and to whom I took the liberty of revealing my projects,



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became interested at once, and thanks to her, the vocal quartette and orchestra of the theatre will give their assistance."

"Ah, it will be a very solemn occasion."

"I truly hope so. Will you promise to come?"

"You are right; it is not far from here to the cathedral, but having lived like a hermit I have become sensitive to the cold . . ."

"I will send a carriage for you and Odile. . . . Will you give me your promise?"

"How could I refuse you, my Christian?"

"Now I am happy."

"Shall I not see you again before that time? Can't you come between two rehearsals to tell me how things are getting along?"

"I don't believe I can. I shall



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have too much to do. But I shall think of you, master, oh, every day. Never say again that I forget you."

The old man remained alone in the little room, which was lighted by one of those chased copper Jewish lamps with four branches suspended from the ceiling. He gave himself up to dreaming, his hands resting on his knees, his head leaning against the back of his arm-chair. So long as he had held his position, his will power had sustained him. A bit of pride, too, pride for not having had in his long life a single day of illness, kept him from giving up. Besides, he wanted Christian to succeed him. To have retired before the young man had taken his degree would have been to give the place to another. Conrad had held his own.

But now, his duties done, great wear-



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iness had taken possession of him, and old age weighed heavily upon him.

He had not left the house since that pleasant October evening when he and Christian had walked together along the river shores, that evening when nature was so resplendent in her autumnal coloring.

His days were spent in this narrow room, with its oak ceiling, where by dint of economy as the years passed by, he had gathered together some beautiful objects, a triptych of the Vandyke school, representing scenes from the Old Testament, a piece of tapestry, — Apollo with the nine muses, — and a very old wrought-iron church reading-desk. All these things had been ferreted out of little shops from time to time in his comings and goings.

The most important of all for Conrad was his music-stand, which was



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a simple but genuine piece of furniture, dating back to the time of the Renaissance. The numberless little sacrifices which this article in particular had cost him, he alone could tell. The almost complete classical collection of organ music filled the shelves, the volumes being plainly but neatly bound. In order to buy these books, his income being so very small, he was obliged not only to give up smoking and drinking wine, but also to go without some of the little comforts of life. The gem of this collection was the *editio princeps* of the celebrated mass for six voices, *Assumpta est Maria*, by Palestrina, bearing the signature of the master. The day when he had discovered it among piles of worthless old papers in a back store-room of a Jewish broker, had been one of the happiest in his life. Conrad Waldmann



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touched it only with deepest reverence.

“ Could it be that which Christian had chosen? ” Thus he queried. He was sitting beneath the Hebrew lamp, which gave forth a dim light. “ But this was not written for the Christmas season. Perhaps it was Bach’s Cantata. No, he spoke of a mass. What could it be? ”

He rose, opened the Renaissance music-stand, and consulted twenty or more volumes. Sometimes he thought he had guessed: “ I have it, it must be that,” then, a moment after, “ However, there are finer masses,” and he began to doubt again. Every now and then Snow Ball, descendant of Lionette, who had succeeded Mephisto, rubbed herself against him as much as to say, “ You are forgetting yourself, master, it is time to go to bed.” The cathedral



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bells had tolled the curfew, and Conrad was still hunting among his books, being no farther advanced than when he began.

In order to rouse him from his meditation Odile was obliged to take hold of his arm and shake him.

“What are you thinking about, sitting up at this hour at your time of life, when all respectable people are in bed? What folly! You deserve as a punishment to go without sugar to-morrow morning in your coffee.”

“You are right, Odile; I humbly confess my fault, — *mea culpa*. Is my candle lighted?”

“It has been lighted this long time.”

“Good-night, Odile, good-night. But wait a minute. Won't you give me a lump of sugar in spite of my delinquencies? You know when one



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grows old, one becomes very fond of dainties."

After Conrad had retired, curiosity got the better of him, and kept him awake until daybreak. He fell asleep at length, murmuring as a conclusion to his reveries:—

"Bah, I might as well have a complete surprise. One thing is sure, and that is, whatever he has chosen will be the touchstone of his taste."

. . . . .  
"Mr. Waldmann, Mr. Waldmann!"

"Well, Odile, are we late, or has the house caught fire?"

"The palace carriage is at the door, Mr. Waldmann."

"You don't know what you are talking about, Mrs. Odile."

"Come and see for yourself."

Conrad, muffled in a heavy overcoat, a comforter around his neck, and woollen gloves on his hands, still



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incredulous, went downstairs, followed by the servant dressed in her best. At the door a luxurious carriage was waiting, drawn by superb horses; on the seat sat a coachman who bore himself in the most correct manner, and a decorative valet stood by the carriage door; all were adorned with the arms of the Princess.

Conrad, quite abashed, got into the carriage; Odile seated herself in front of him, and the high-bred animals dashed off at a spirited pace, in spite of the light fall of snow which covered the ground. The drive was soon ended.

The cathedral was already full. Hundreds of candles were burning, forming luminous clusters and brilliantly lighting up the massive columns. The high altar, with its carved wood reredos of the fifteenth century, displaying the pathetic Descent from



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the Cross, was dazzlingly bright. Conrad Waldmann had never looked at this marvellous altar-screen without being deeply moved. The soul-uplifting thought, which artists of former times put into their religious works, was strongly brought out in this production. The sculptor, while carving and shaping with his patient chisel the hard oak, certainly had not thought of gaining wealth or renown; a part of his very soul had gone into this piece of wood, which, after four centuries, still excited the highest admiration. Conrad had never failed to find in this masterpiece an example of artistic honesty and humility.

“This way, Mr. Waldmann,” said the beadle. “I was told to put aside two chairs for you.”

He conducted the old man and Odile to their seats at the left of the altar. The last candles had just been



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lighted; the whole cathedral was ablaze with light. People were still coming, not even a corner was left unoccupied.

There was great excitement when the Princess, preceded by ushers with laced coats, made her entrance in company with the high court dignitaries. She was very young, and, like her mother, a delicate and charming blonde.

The Princess with her suite took the seats at the right of the altar, which had been reserved for them. Then without delay the clergy appeared, resplendent in their gowns richly trimmed with gold lace, escorted by the choir boys carrying the censer. Immediately the cathedral became perfumed with incense, and the candles, through the wavy bluish atmosphere, appeared far away, like stars on a misty night. The high-



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priest had reached the choir. A sudden silence fell upon the assembly. How deeply moved was old Conrad Waldmann! His eyes were eagerly fixed upon the organ gallery. He followed every movement of his young pupil, this son after his own heart. Christian, the soloists, and the director of the orchestra were exchanging the final words. At length in the gallery, also, silence reigned.

"My God, what has he chosen?" Conrad asked himself for the hundredth time. "I hope and pray that he may do himself justice, that all will be well." The leader raised his baton. Conrad, scarcely breathing, rested his bowed head on his hand, and waited. The organ burst forth in full majestic chords. It was like a solemn wave of harmony flowing slowly between classic shores. These



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twenty or thirty measures bore the stamp of genius.

At the first note the old man had raised his head; he had grown as white as the linen on the altar.

“I must be mistaken; it is impossible!”

The impressive prelude continued. A spirit of awe descended from the organ, and spread throughout the cathedral. The river grew clearer and more luminous, broader and deeper, and at length became a sea with mighty waves.

*Kyrie, Kyrie eleison!*

The choir, accompanied by the organ, responded to the voice of the officiating priest.

*Kyrie eleison! Christe eleison!*

Each note proclaimed a deep religious faith. The whole had the beauty of the eternal verities. Conrad Waldmann, his head fallen again



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in his hands, was weeping, overborne by surprise, amazement, and joy.

He had recognized his own long hidden Christmas *Mass*. The execution was perfect. The great composition had been searched to its very foundation stone, and its minutest details had been mastered. Not one of Conrad Waldmann's conceptions had escaped. The orchestra, chorus, and soloists rivalled one another in zeal to render his thought with integrity. The organ execution was masterful. During the rendering of the melodious *Sanctus*, the *Agnus Dei*, a trio of ecstatic expression, the sweet *Benedictus*, with chord accompaniment, and notably the *Elevation*, when from the king of instruments came a hymn overflowing with joy, infinite love, and even the cry of beatitude of an enraptured soul, prostrated before the Infant Christ, where the



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rustic flute, the shepherd's pastoral pipe, answered the viols of the cherubs, there was not a dry eye in this vast subdued assembly. The old man wept through it all, tears of joy trickling slowly down his sunken cheeks and through his thin, trembling fingers. But these tears were more refreshing than May dew on the petals of a half-blown rose; for, had it not been for this relief, Conrad's heart would have ceased to beat. His most secret and dearest dream, which he had never, no, never, expected to see realized, was by a miracle being accomplished. He was permitted to hear this *Mass*, the anguish and delight of his life, magnificently executed. In spite of his modesty, he felt that his labor had not been in vain, that the work was worthy, and that it would not die. More fortunate than his master, Bach, he, during



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his lifetime, entered into the promised land.

“Ah, what a noble child!” He was thinking of Christian. “It was he who had thought of all this, he who had planned and executed all so well. And I accused him of neglecting me, when he had not a single thought which was not for my happiness.”

Now the *Mass* was drawing to its close with an *Alleluia* almost worthy to be compared with that of the *Messiah*. In a mighty fugue the organ, orchestra, and chorus ascended and descended the staff; it rushed like a mighty stream, and resounded like thunder. The stupendous structure of this *Mass* had a crowning worthy of itself; and to the rushing torrent of sound ruled by a supreme order, to these notes hurled at full force from these enormous pipes, to these two hundred voices and sixty instruments



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giving forth their summons, the whole cathedral vibrated, and a thrill ran through the multitude.

Then for a brief moment a profound silence, which the hum of an insect might have broken, fell upon the vast congregation.

“Oh, master, master, I cannot wait to embrace you!”

Christian, trembling from head to foot, had hurriedly left the gallery.

Waldmann, unable to utter a word, opened his arms and drew the young man to his heart.

“Come, master, the Princess wishes to see you.”

They passed slowly through the crowd, which stood back respectfully. The young maiden, radiant as spring, came towards Conrad.

“This is a happy hour for us all,” she said. “In the name of our city I thank you.”



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And, lowering her voice:

“ I think you knew my mother? ”

Had an echo of the people's gossip reached her ear? It was hardly probable; indeed it seemed to Conrad that in thus speaking the Princess had desired to associate the dead with this evening's success.

Conrad tried to answer,—useless effort. The Princess extending her delicate hand, he bent and kissed it, and on the slender and shapely fingers encircled with gems, his long white locks flowed like a silver stream.

“ Master,” said his pupil, “ musicians, critics, and amateurs have come from Leipzig, Munich, Weimar, and Dresden . . . ”

As Christian named over the people with their titles, increasing amazement was depicted on the face of Conrad. Could it be possible that all



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these celebrated men who were surrounding and congratulating him had come in honor of such a humble person as himself, and were anxiously waiting for an introduction? The old man could not believe his eyes; he looked now at the Princess, now at Christian, who was in an ecstasy of joy. Ah, how the young man had exerted himself to bring about this result! He had done all in his power, writing, soliciting, enlisting the services of his friends and acquaintances, turning to the best account all the influence which could be brought to bear, arousing the most indifferent by his enthusiasm; and besides, he was seconded by the conductor of the orchestra, who, also, had been entranced with the *Missa Solemnis*; and by the Princess, to whom he went each week to give an account of the rehearsals. The



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success, indeed, equalled his fondest hopes.

“Master, I have taken the liberty to conclude a contract with the firm Holler and Son at Munich to publish your composition. Mr. Holler insisted upon coming himself to offer you the first copy.”

A short, stout, smiling man came towards Conrad, bowed ceremoniously, and held out to the old man a superb octavo volume bound in fawn-colored morocco, where these words, “*Missa Solemnis*” and this name, “*Conrad Waldmann*,” shone forth in golden letters in the midst of beautiful gothic designs.

The candles were beginning to flicker. On a signal from the master of ceremonies, the court ushers arranged the people for the departure of the Princess.

Then she, with exquisite grace, of-



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ferred her arm to the old man, who trembled like an aspen leaf, and led him to the grand portal; the court dignitaries, the strangers assembled for the occasion, and Christian, who was intrusted with the precious volume, walked behind.

The people had poured out of the side doors and now the square was like an agitated sea. The university students, holding lighted torches and flying banners, formed a double line through the middle of the crowd. When the aged artist appeared, on the arm of the charming Princess, the cheers, stifled with difficulty in the cathedral, burst forth like a tempest.

“What is the meaning of all this?” thought Waldmann. “Surely I am dreaming.”

But already strong arms had lifted him off the ground, and Conrad, in spite of himself, was borne along



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in triumph under the strangely beautiful starry sky, while all about him were burning torches and waving flags. The streets resounded with the songs and the cheers of the young, and, in fact, of the whole city. Conrad noticed that all the windows were ablaze with lights; the reflections of the torches wavering on the façades; the dense crowd which preceded and followed him. He heard the songs and bravos, saw hands stretched out to him and hats waved, but all these things only made it seem to him more and more like a vision.

At length his little house was reached. Odile, full of pride, stood on the threshold awaiting him, a lamp in her hand.

"Indeed, master," said Christian, "it can no longer be said that there is no enthusiasm in young hearts!"



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“My child, my dear child . . . You will thank them for me, won't you? I cannot, I cannot.”

Reeling like an intoxicated man, Conrad entered his house, preceded by Odile, who repeated again and again, “My God, my God, what an evening!” The door was closed. Still the students remained a few minutes longer under the windows of the old man, singing in his honor. Then, the cathedral clock having struck two, the multitude dispersed with a final and tremendous hurrah!

Oh, beautiful night! Beautiful Christmas night! The white frost sparkled on the trees and shrubbery. There seemed to be fantastic chandeliers, pearl necklaces, and strings of diamonds fastened to every branch. The snow, too, appeared to be luminous. In the clear depths of the far-off midnight sky myriads of twink-



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ling stars pointed out the way to seraphim, bearers of good tidings.

“You had better sleep late to-morrow,” Odile said to Conrad Waldmann, when leaving him.

“I think I shall not close my eyes. I am too happy.”

. . . . .  
At ten o'clock in the morning, not having heard Mr. Waldmann stirring about, Odile went into his room. He was seated before the table, his hands stretched out, and his head resting on the gold embossed volume.

“Is it possible that he did not go to bed!” said Odile.

She called him, but received no answer. She went nearer and gently touched him on the shoulder. Not a movement. His eyelids were half closed. He was smiling the smile of the aged Simeon, singing his *Nunc dimittis*.



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This stillness alarmed Odile. She touched his hands and found them cold and rigid. Kind death had not wished Conrad Waldmann to survive his apotheosis. As the reaper falls asleep on his garnered sheaves, he likewise had fallen asleep in the height of his triumph, passing without transition from the immortal music of his *Missa Solemnis* to the ineffable joy of divine harmonies.















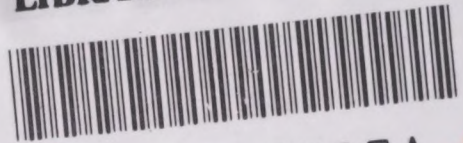
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